

THE
SPEECH
 OF
WILLIAM
 Late LORD
 Viscount Stafford,
 ON THE
SCAFFOLD
 ON
 Tower-Hill,
 Immediately before his
EXECUTION,

Wednesday, Decemb. 29. 1680.

EDMUNDSON
 Printed in the Year, 1681.

*29 Decemb. 1680
 L. Stafford's Speech
 L. L. & J. Smith*

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By the permission of Almighty God, I am this day brought hither to suffer Death, as if I were guilty of High Treason: I do most truly, in the presence of the Eternal, Omnipotent, and Allknowing God, protest upon my Salvation, That I am as innocent as it is possible for any man to be, so much as in a thought, of the Crimes laid to my charge.

I acknowledge it to be a particular grace and favour of the Holy Trinity, to have given me this long time to prepare myself for Eternity: I have not made so good use of that Grace as I ought to have done, partly by my not having so well recollected my self as I might have done, and partly because not only my Friends, but my Wife and Children, have for several dayes been forbid to see me but in the presence of one of my Warders. This hath been a great trouble and distraction unto me; but I hope God of his infinite mercy will pardon my Defects, and accept of my good Intentions. Since my long imprisonment, I have considered often what

what could be the Original Cause of my being thus accused, since I knew my self not culpable, so much as in a thought; and I cannot believe it to be upon any other account, than my being of the Church of Rome. I have no reason to be ashamed of my Religion; for it teacheth nothing but the right Worship of God, Obedience to the King, and due Subordination to the Temporal Laws of the Kingdom. And I do submit to all Articles of faith believed and taught in the Catholick Church, believing them to be most Consonant to the Word of God. And whereas it hath so much and often been objected, that the Church holds that Sovereign Princes Excommunicated by the Pope, may by their Subjects be Deposed or Murdered; as to the Murder of Princes, I have been taught as a matter of Faith in the Catholick Faith, that such Doctrine is diabolical, horrid and detestable, and contrary to the Law of God, Nature, and Nations; and as such, from my heart I renounce and abominate it. As for the Doctrine of Deposing of Princes, I know some Divines of the Catholick Church hold it, but as able and learned as they, have writ against it; but it was not pretended to be the Doctrine of the Church, that is, any point of Catholick Faith: Wherefore I do here in my Conscience declare, that it is my true and real Judgement, That the same Doctrine of Deposing Kings is contrary to the Fundamental Laws of this Kingdom, injurious to Sovereign Power, and consequently would be in me, or any other of His Majesties Subjects, impious and damnable. I believe and profess, that there is one God, one Saviour, one holy Catholick Church, of which, through the mercy of God, I die a Member.

To my great and unspeakable grief, I have offended God in many things, by many great offences; But I give him most humble thanks, not in any of those Crimes of which I was accused.

All the Members of either House having liberty to propose in the House what they think fit for the good of the Kingdom, accordingly I proposed what I thought fit: the House is judge of the fitness or unfitness of it, and I think I never said any thing that was unfitting there, or contrary to the Law and use of Parliament; for certainly if I had, the Lords would, as they might, have some way punished me: So I am not culpable before God or Man.

It is much reported of Indulgences, Dispensations, Pardons, to Murder, Rebel, Lye, Forswear, and commit such other Crimes held and given in the Church. I do here profess in the presence of God, I never learned, believed, or practised any such things, but the contrary; and I speak this without any Equivocation or Reservation whatsoever: And certainly were I guilty either my self, or knew of any one that were guilty, whosoever that were so, of any of those Crimes of which I am accused, I were not onely the greatest fool imaginable, but a perfect Madman, and as wicked as any of those that so falsely have accused me, if I should not discover any ill design I knew in any kind, and so upon discovery save my life, I having so often had so fair occasions proposed unto me, and so am guilty of Self-murder, which is a most grievous and hainous sin. And though I was last impeached at the Lords Bar, yet I have great grounds to believe, that I was first brought to Tryal on the belief, that to save my Life I would make some great Discovery; and truly so I would, had I known any such thing of any ill design, or illegal dangerous Plot, either of my self, or any other person whosoever, without exception. But had I a thousand Lives, I would lose them all, rather than falsely accuse either my self, or any other whosoever: And if I had known of any Treason, and should thus deny it, as I do now upon my Salvation at this time, I should have no hope of Salvation, which now I have through the Merits of Christ Jesus.

I do beseech God to bless his Majesty, who is my lawful King and Sovereign, who I was always by all Laws Humane and Divine, bound to obey; and I am sure that no power upon Earth, either singly or all together, can legally allow me or any body else to lift a hand against him, or his Legal Authority. I do hold that the Constitution of the Government of this Kingdom is the only way to continue peace and quietness; which God long continue.

Next to Treason, I hold Murder in abhorrence, and have ever done, and do; and I do sincerely profess, that if I could at this time free my self immediately, and establish what Religion I would, and what Government I would, and make my self as great as I could wish, and all by the death of one of those Fellows that by their perjuries have brought me

to the place where I am, I so much abhor to be the cause of any mans death, that I would not any way be the cause of their Murder: How much less would I endeavour the Assassination of His Majesty, whom I hold to be as gracious a King as ever this or any other Nation had, and under whom the people may enjoy their Liberties as much as ever any did: and if it please God to grant him Life and Happiness, according as I have always wished and prayed for, I am morally persuaded, that He and all his Dominions will be as happy and prosperous as ever people were; which I beseech God grant.

I do most humbly ask pardon of the Almighty and All-merciful God, for all the great offences I have committed against his Divine Majesty; and I know he would not have the death and the confusion of a sinner, but that he may repent and live: in that assurance I hope, knowing he never despiseth a contrite heart; and though I have not so feeling a Contrition as I would, yet I have it as well as I can, and I doubt not but that God will accept of the good will.

I do desire that all people will forgive any injury that I have done them in any thing, either wilfully or by chance; and I do heartily forgive all people in the world that have injured me; I forgive even those perjured men that so falsely have brought me hither by their perjury.

I do now upon my Death and Salvation aver, that I never spoke one word either unto *Oates* or *Turboil*, or to my knowledge ever saw them until my Trial; and for *Dugdale*, I never spoke unto him of any thing but about a Foot-boy, or Foot-man, or Foot-race; and never was then alone with him. All the punishment that I wish them, is, that they may repent and acknowledge the wrong they have done me; then it will appear how innocent I am. God forgive them! I have a great confidence that it will please Almighty God, and that he will in a short time bring Truth to light; then you and all the world will see and know, what injury they have done me.

I hope I have made it appear that I have some Conscience; for if I had none, certainly I would have saved my Life by acknowledging my self Guilty; which I could have done, though I know I am not in the least Guilty. And I, having some Conscience, make very ill use of it; for I throw my self
into

into eternal pain, by thus plainly and constantly denying thus at my Death, the knowledge of what I am accused of in the least.

I have said thus much in discharge of my Conscience, and do aver upon my Salvation, what I have said to be really true.

I shall say little of my Trial; and whether it were all according to the known Law; I am too much a Party to say much of it: if it were not so, God forgive him or them that were the cause of it.

My Judges were all persons of Honour, who were all as much bound to judge rightly; as if they had been upon Oath upon what was Legally proved; and not to Vote but according as in their Consciences they were satisfied; and if any of them did otherwise upon any account whatsoever, I beseech God forgive them, I do so heartily.

I shall end with my hearty Prayers for the happiness of His Majesty, that he may enjoy all happiness in this world and in the world to come, and govern his People according to the Laws of God, and that the People may be sensible what a Blessing God hath so miraculously given them, and obey Him as they ought: I ask Pardon with a prostrate heart of Almighty God, for all the great offences that I have committed against his Divine Majesty, and hope through the Merits and Passion of Christ Jesus, to obtain everlasting Happiness; into whose hands I commit my Spirit, asking pardon of every person that I have done any wrong unto: I do freely forgive all that have any ways wronged me; I do with all the Devotion and Repentance that I can, humbly invoke the Mercy of our blessed Saviour.

I beseech God, not to revenge my innocent Blood on the Nation, or on those that were the causers of it, with my last Breath. I do with my last Breath truly assert my *Innocency*, and hope the Omnipotent All-seeing Just God will deal with me accordingly.

FINIS.